

Versified Version of Doctrine & Covenants Section 76

This is quoted as it appeared in the Times & Seasons, the Latter-day Saint newspaper in Nauvoo, Illinois. Yes, I know it's not a hymn, but so many people write and ask me if I know where to find it that I'm posting it here anyway. W. W. Phelps wrote the first part, and some historians believe he also wrote the 'reply' under the direction of Joseph Smith; others think Joseph wrote it himself. Regardless of who wrote it, the finalized copy bears Joseph's signature, approving it. The version of this revelation contained in the Doctrine & Covenants is certainly the one we consider 'scripture', but it's interesting to note how it might have appeared in poetic version if, say the Old Testament prophet Isaiah had received the revelation.

Times and Seasons, Volume 3 (February 1, 1843) pp. 81-85
Nauvoo, Illinois

ANCIENT POETRY.

The following very curious poetic composition, is at once both novel and interesting; for while the common landmarks of modern poetry are entirely disregarded; there is something so dignified and exalted conveyed in the ideas of this production, that it cannot fail to strike the attention of every superficial observer.

Uncontrolled by the narrow limits of this earth, and raised above all sublunary objects, his mind soars aloft unto other kingdoms, unravels the secrets of eternity, and contemplates the organization of worlds, in other spheres: the destiny of the living, the dying, and the dead are developed; together with the laws that govern other worlds, and the state of their inhabitants; the "heavens of heavens," open before his gaze, and the celestial kingdom; the habitation of the great "I Am," with all its resplendant [resplendent], brilliant, and dazzling glory, bursts upon his sight. The Celestial, the Terrestrial and the Telesstial worlds, with all their magnificence [magnificence] and beauty are open to his view; whilst the various states of their respective inhabitants, are presented before his vision. The dark and gloomy abodes of the departed lost, are also unlocked, and their confusion, and misery developed. Our poet seems to be perfectly at home among heavenly worlds, and converses about their proceedings with as much familiarity as one could do about his domestic economy. He unlocked [unlocked] great, and important principles which were indeed made known to the ancients; but which have been hid for ages: and when we contemplate the things that are unfolded we shall be led to say with Paul, "great is the mystery of godliness."

Concerning the style of the poetry, there seems to be a native simplicity, a brilliance of thought, and an originality in the composition, that can only be equalled [equaled] in the oracles of truth; and by those who profess the same spirit: and when the muse of those ancient poets was fired by the spirit of God, and they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, there was a richness a dignity and a brilliancy

of ideas; and an exuberance of thought that ran through all their productions, as in the facinating [fascinating] beauties of poesy they rolled forth the words of eternal life, with all their richness, and dignity, and glory; while at the same time they paid little or no attention to the rules of poetic composition. Let the curtains of heaven be withdrawn, and the purposes and glories of the eternal world burst upon his view and the dry forms, and simple jingling of poetry, alone, will be very dry and insipid to the enlarged and enlightened understanding of a man of God.

On this subjective we quote the following from the learned Rev. John Brown: "The songs of Moses, Deborah, and Hannah, the prayer of Hezekiah, and Habbakkuk [Habakkuk], if not also of Mary and Zacharias, Exod. xv., Judg. v., 1 Sam. ii., Isaiah, xxxviii., Hab. iii., Luke i., and the Psalms, most of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations, appear to be of the poetic kind. but after all the pains of the learned, we cannot understand the rules of their metre [meter]; nor can we say if they attended to any fixed rules; and the truth is, not rules in the world will render a man a true poet, who has not a proper stock of imagery and fire in his own mind. Besides the unequalled [unequaled] fire and bold strokes of imagery in scripture poems, their principal excellency is their being calculated to promote the honor of God, and the everlasting happiness of mankind."-Dic. of the Bible.

The last principle mentioned by Mr. Brown is certainly very clearly developed in the poetry of Mr. Smith; and whatever may have been the preconceived opinion of Justin Butterfield Esq., we are persuaded [persuaded] that he will now be convinced that the modern Prophets can prophecy in poetry, as well as the ancient prophets and that no difference, even of that kind any longer exists.-[Ed.

“Vade Mecum”

From W. W. Phelps to Joseph Smith, the Prophet
William W. Phelps

Go with me, will you go to the Saints that have died--
To the next better world where the righteous reside?
Where the angels and spirits in harmony be,
In the joys of a vast paradise?--Go with me.

Go with me where the truth and the virtues prevail;
Where the union is one, and the years never fail;
Not a heart can conceive, nor a nat'ral eye see
What the Lord has prepar'd for the just.--Go with me.

Go with me where there's no destruction or war;
Neither tyrants or sland'ers, nor nations ajar;
Where the system is perfect, and happiness free,
And the life is eternal with God.--Go with me.

Go with me, will you go to the mansions above,
Where the bliss, and the knowledge, the light, and the love,
And the glory of God do eternally be?
Death, the wages of sin, is not there.--Go with me.

“The Vision”
From Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps, Esq.
Joseph Smith

- [1] I will go, I will go, to the home of the Saints,
Where the virtue's the value, and life the reward;
But before I return to my former estate,
I must fulfill the mission I had from the Lord.
- [2] Wherefore, hear O ye heavens, and give ear O ye earth,
And rejoice, ye inhabitants, truly again;
For the Lord he is God, and his life never ends,
And besides him there ne'er was a Savior of men.
- [3] His ways are a wonder, his wisdom is great;
The extent of his doings there's none can unveil;
His purposes fail not; from age unto age
He still is the same, and his years never fail.
- [4] His throne is the heavens--his life-time is all
Of eternity now, and eternity then;
His union is power, and none stays his hand,
The Alpha, Omega, for ever. Amen.
- [5] For thus saith the Lord, in the spirit of truth,
I am merciful, gracious, and good unto those
That fear me, and live for the life that's to come:
My delight is to honour the Saints with repose,
- [6] That serve me in righteousness true to the end;
Eternal's their glory and great their reward.
I'll surely reveal all my myst'ries to them--
The great hidden myst'ries in my kingdom stor'd;
- [7] From the council in Kolob, to time on the earth,
And for ages to come unto them I will show
My pleasure and will, what the kingdom will do:
Eternity's wonders they truly shall know.
- [8] Great things of the future I'll show unto them,
Yea, things of the vast generations to rise;
For their wisdom and glory shall be very great,

And their pure understanding extend to the skies.

[9] And before them the wisdom of wise men shall cease,
And the nice understanding of prudent ones fail!
For the light of my spirit shall light mine elect,
And the truth is so mighty 'twill ever prevail.

[10] And the secrets and plans of my will I'll reveal,
The sanctifi'd pleasures when earth is renew'd;
What the eye hath not seen, nor the ear hath yet heard,
Nor the heart of the natural man ever view'd.

[11] I, Joseph, the prophet, in spirit beheld,
And the eyes of the inner man truly did see
Eternity sketch'd in a vision from God,
Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be.

[12] Those things which the Father ordained of old,
Before the world was or a system had run;
Through Jesus, the Maker and Savior of all--
The only begotten (Messiah) his son.

[13] Of whom I bear record, as all prophets have,
And the record I bear is the fulness--yea, even
The truth of the gospel of Jesus--the Christ,
With whom I convers'd in the vision of heav'n.

[14] For while in the act of translating his word,
Which the Lord in his grace had appointed to me,
I came to the gospel recorded by John,
Chapter fifth, and the twenty-ninth verse which you'll see.

[15] I marvell'd at these resurrections, indeed,
For it came unto me by the spirit direct:
And while I did meditate what it all meant,
The Lord touch'd the eyes of my own intellect.

[16] Hosanna, for ever! They open'd anon,
And the glory of God shone around where I was;
And there was the Son at the Father's right hand,
In a fulness of glory and holy applause.

[17] I beheld round the throne holy angels and hosts,
And sanctified beings from the worlds that have been,
In holiness worshipping God and the Lamb,

For ever and ever. Amen and amen.

[18] And now after all of the proofs made of him,
By witnesses truly, by whom he was known,
This is mine, last of all, that he lives; yea, he lives!
And sits at the right hand of God on his throne.

[19] And I heard a great voice bearing record from heav'n,
He's the Saviour and only begotten of God;
By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,
Even all that career in the heavens so broad.

[20] Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,
Are sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;
And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons
By the very same truths and the very same powers.

[21] And I saw and bear record of warfare in heaven;
For an angel of light, in authority great,
Rebell'd against Jesus and sought for his power,
But was thrust down to woe from his glorified state.

[22] And the heavens all wept, and the tears dropp'd like dew,
That Lucifer, son of the morning, had fell!
Yea, is fallen! is fallen and become, oh, alas!
The son of perdition, the devil of hell!

[23] And while I was yet in the spirit of truth,
The commandment was--"Write ye the vision all out,
For Satan, old serpent, the devil's for war,
And yet will encompass the Saints round about."

[24] And I saw, too, the suffring and misery of those
(Overcome by the devil, in warfare and fight)
In hell-fire and vengeance--the doom of the damn'd;
For the Lord said the vision is further, so write:

[25] For thus saith the Lord, now concerning all those,
Who know of my power and partake of the same;
And suffer themselves that they be overcome
By the power of Satan, despising my name--

[26] Defying my power, and denying the truth:
They are they of the world, or of men most forlorn,
The sons of perdition, of whom, ah! I say,

'Twere better for them had they never been born.

[27] They're the vessels of wrath, and dishonour to God,
Doom'd to suffer his wrath in the regions of woe,
Through all the long night of eternity's round,
With the devil and all of his angels below.

[28] Of whom it is said no forgiveness is found,
In this world, alas! nor the world that's to come,
For they have deny'd the spirit of God,
After having receiv'd it, and mis'ry's their doom.

[29] And denying the only begotten of God,
And crucify him to themselves, as they do,
And openly put him to shame in their flesh,
By the gospel they cannot repentance renew.

[30] They are they who go to the great lake of fire,
Which burneth with brimstone, yet never consumes,
And dwell with the devil, and angels of his,
While eternity goes and eternity comes.

[31] They are they who must groan through the great second death,
And are not redeemed in the time of the Lord;
While all the rest are, through the triumph of Christ,
Made partakers of grace, by the power of his word.

[32] The myst'ry of godliness truly is great;
The past, and the present, and what is to be;
And this is the gospel--glad tidings to all,
Which the voice from the heavens bore record to me:

[33] That he came to the world in the middle of time,
To lay down his life for his friends and his foes,
And bear away sin as a mission of love,
And sanctify earth for a blessed repose.

[34] 'Tis decreed that he'll save all the work of his hands,
And sanctify them by his own precious blood;
And purify earth for the Sabbath of rest,
By the agent of fire as it was by the flood.

[35] The Saviour will save all his Father did give,
Even all that he gave in the regions abroad,
Save the sons of perdition--they are lost, ever lost!

And can never return to the presence of God.

[36] They are they who must reign with the devil in hell,
In eternity now, and eternity then!
Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'd,
And the punishment still is eternal. Amen.

[37] And which is the torment apostates receive,
But the end or the place where the torment began,
Save to them who are made to partake of the same,
Was never, nor will be revealed unto man.

[38] Yet God, by a vision, shows a glimpse of their fate,
And straightway he closes the scene that was shown;
So the width, or the depth, or the misery thereof,
Save to those that partake, is forever unknown.

[39] And while I was pondering, the vision was closed,
And the voice said to me, write the vision; for, lo!
'Tis the end of the scene of the sufferings of those
Who remain filthy still in their anguish and woe.

[40] And again I bear record of heavenly things,
Where virtue's the value above all that is priz'd,
Of the truth of the gospel concerning the just,
That rise in the first resurrection of Christ.

[41] Who receiv'd, and believ'd, and repented likewise,
And then were baptiz'd, as a man always was,
Who ask'd and receiv'd a remission of sin,
And honoured the kingdom by keeping its laws.

[42] Being buried in water, as Jesus had been,
And keeping the whole of his holy commands,
They received the gift of the spirit of truth,
By the ordinance truly of laying on hands.

[43] For these overcome, by their faith and their works,
Being tried in their life-time, as purified gold,
And seal'd by the spirit of promise to life,
By men called of God, as was Aaron of old.

[44] They are they, of the church of the first-born of God,
And unto whose hands he committeth all things;
For they hold the keys of the kingdom of heav'n,

And reign with the Saviour, as priests and as kings.

[45] They're priests of the order of Melchizedek,
Like Jesus (from whom is this highest reward),
Receiving a fulness of glory and light;
As written--they're Gods even sons of the Lord.

[46] So all things are theirs; yea, of life or of death;
Yea, whether things now, or to come, all are theirs,
And they are the Saviour's, and he is the Lord's,
Having overcome all, as eternity's heirs.

[47] 'Tis wisdom that man never glory in man,
But give God the glory for all that he hath;
For the righteous will walk in the presence of God,
While the wicked are trod underfoot in his wrath.

[48] Yea, the righteous shall dwell in the presence of God,
And of Jesus, forever, from earth's second birth--
For when he comes down in the splendour of heav'n,
All those he'll bring with him to reign on the earth.

[49] These are they that arise in their bodies of flesh,
When the trump of the first resurrection shall sound;
These are they that come up to Mount Zion, in life,
Where the blessings and gifts of the spirit abound.

[50] These are they that have come to the heavenly place;
To the numberless courses of angels above:
To the city of God, e'en the holiest of all,
And the home of the blessed, the fountain of love;

[51] To the church of old Enoch, and of the first-born:
And gen'ral assembly of ancient renown'd,
Whose names are all kept in the archives of heav'n,
As chosen and faithful, and fit to be crown'd.

[52] These are they that are perfect through Jesus' own blood,
whose bodies celestial are mention'd by Paul,
where the sun is the typical glory thereof,
And God, and his Christ, are the true judge of all.

[53] Again, I beheld the terrestrial world,
In the order and glory of Jesus go on;
'Twas not as the church of the first-born of God,

But shone in its place, as the moon to the sun,

[54] Behold, these are they that have died without law;
The heathen of ages that never had hope,
And those of the region and shadow of death,
The spirits in prison, that light has brought up.

[55] To spirits in prison the Saviour once preach'd,
And taught them the gospel, with powers afresh;
And then were the living baptiz'd for their dead,
That they might be judg'd as if men in the flesh.

[56] These are they that are hon'able men of the earth;
Who were blinded and dup'd by the cunning of men;
They receiv'd not the truth of the Saviour at first;
But did, when they heard it in prison again.

[57] Not valiant for truth, they obtain'd not the crown,
But are of that glory that's typ'd by the moon:
They are they, that come into the presence of Christ,
But not to the fulness of God on his throne.

[58] Again, I beheld the telestial, as third,
The lesser, or starry world, next in its place,
For the leaven must leaven three measures of meal,
And every knee bow that is subject to grace.

[59] These are they that receiv'd not the gospel of Christ,
Or evidence, either, that he ever was;
As the stars are all diff'rent in glory and light,
So differs the glory of these by the laws.

[60] These are they that deny not the spirit of God,
But are thrust down to hell, with the devil, for sins,
As hypocrites, liars, whoremongers and thieves,
And stay 'till the last resurrection begins.

[61] 'Till the Lamb shall have finish'd the work he begun;
Shall have trodden the winepress in fury alone.
And overcome all by the pow'r of his might:
He conquers to conquer, and saves all his own.

[62] These are they that receive not a fulness of light,
From Christ, in eternity's world, where they are,
The terrestrial sends them the Comforter, though,

And minist'ring angels, to happify there.

[63] And so the telestial is minister'd to,
By ministers from the terrestrial one,
As terrestrial is, from the celestial throne;
And the great, greater, greatest, seem's stars, moon, and sun.

[64] And thus I beheld, in the vision of heav'n,
The telestial glory, dominion and bliss,
Surpassing the great understanding of men,--
Unknown, save reveal'd, in a world vain as this.

[65] And lo! I beheld the terrestrial, too,
Which excels the telestial in glory and light,
In splendour and knowledge, and wisdom and joy,
In blessings and graces, dominion and might.

[66] I beheld the celestial, in glory sublime;
Which is the most excellent kingdom that is,
Where God, e'en the Father, in harmony reigns;
Almighty, supreme, and eternal in bliss.

[67] Where the church of the first-born in union reside,
And they see as they're seen, and they know as they're known
Being equal in power, dominion and might,
With a fulness of glory and grace round his throne.

[68] The glory celestial is one like the sun;
The glory terrestrial is one like the moon;
The glory telestial is one like the stars,
And all harmonize like the parts of a tune.

[69] As the stars are all different in lustre and size,
So the telestial region is mingled in bliss;
From the least unto greatest, and greatest to least,
The reward is exactly as promised in this.

[70] These are they that came out for Apollos and Paul;
For Cephas and Jesus, in all kinds of hope;
For Enoch and Moses, and Peter and John;
For Luther and Calvin, and even the Pope.

[71] For they never received the gospel of Christ
Nor the prophetic spirit that came from the Lord;
Nor the covenant neither, which Jacob once had;

They went their own way, and they have their reward.

[72] By the order of God, last of all, these are they,
That will not be gather'd with saints here below,
To be caught up to Jesus, and meet in the cloud:
In darkness they worshipp'd; to darkness they go.

[73] These are they that are sinful, the wicked at large,
That glutted their passion by meanness or worth;
All liars, adulterers, sorcerers, and proud,
And suffer as promis'd, God's wrath on the earth.

[74] These are they that must suffer the vengeance of hell,
'Till Christ shall have trodden all enemies down,
And perfected his work, in the fulness of time,
And is crowned on his throne with his glorious crown.

[75] The vast multitude of the telestial world--
As the stars of the skies, or the sands of the sea;
The voice of Jehovah echo'd far and wide,
Every tongue shall confess and they all bow the knee.

[76] Ev'ry man shall be judg'd by the works of his life,
And receive a reward in the mansions prepar'd;
For his judgments are just, and his works never end,
As his prophets and servants have always declar'd.

[77] But the great things of God, which he show'd unto rife,
Unlawful to utter, I dare not declare;
They surpass all the wisdom and greatness of men,
And only are seen, as has Paul where they are.

[78] I will go, I will go, while the secret of life,
Is blooming in heaven, and blasting in hell;
Is leaving on earth, and a-budding in space:
I will go, I will go, with you, brother, farewell.